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ABSTRACT

As individuals mature, they show increasing responsibility for events in their lives, but with variation in this form of maturation from one individual to another. These individual differences can be observed in doctoral candidates' activities associated with completion of the doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this study was to assess doctoral candidates' concepts of responsibility associated with dissertation completion, questioning who is perceived as responsible for different dissertation tasks and whether the student or the university should be responsible for these tasks. The developed scale, which uses a semantic differential format, was completed by 142 graduates and 97 nongraduates in a college of education. A factor analysis of the scale indicated two factors, a conclusion supported by a Rasch analysis. Some differences in attributed responsibility were noted between graduates and nongraduates with the nongraduates rating responsibility for tasks higher for university effort than student effort. A two-group discriminant analysis predicted a group membership of 78% of the subjects. The scale is useful for assessing attitudes of doctoral candidates in a college of education toward responsibility for dissertation tasks and for planning student advising based on these attitudes. An appendix contains the responsibility scale. (Contains 4 figures, 7 tables, and 11 references.) (Author/SLD)

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ED 400 312

The Responsibility Scale

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Abstract

As individuals mature, they show increasing responsibility for events in their lives, but with variation in this form of maturation from one individual to another. These individual differences can be observed in doctoral candidates' activities associated with completion of the doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this study was to assess doctoral candidates' concepts of responsibility associated with completion of the doctoral dissertation. Who is perceived as responsible for different dissertation tasks and who should be responsible for these tasks - the student or the university? The scale uses a semantic differential format and was completed by 142 graduates and 97 non-graduates (ABDs) in a College of Education. A factor analysis of the scale indicated 2 factors, which was supported by a Rasch analysis. Some differences in attributed responsibility were noted between graduates and non-graduates with the non-graduates rating responsibility for tasks higher for university effort than student effort. A two-group discriminant analysis predicted 78% of the subjects as members of their respective groups. The scale is useful for assessing attitudes of doctoral candidates in a College of Education toward responsibility for dissertation tasks and for planning student advising based on those attitudes.

Patterns of individual growth show a progression from dependence at infancy to independence at adulthood. Adult caretakers of the younger person normally expect increasing evidence of independence and responsibility to be demonstrated as an indication of maturation. Psychological scales such as scales of social maturity contain a series of items assessing maturation and increasing levels of responsibility and independence. Individual differences in rate of maturation and acceptance of responsibility can be observed; but, adults in settings requiring mature responsible behavior are expected to demonstrate it. This is specifically true in university graduate programs where graduate degrees signify possession of personal characteristics and skills consistent with those who will hold highly responsible positions.

A specific indicator of independence and responsible behavior is completion of the doctoral dissertation. Students relatively easily pass courses with specific requirements such as reading lists, exams, or discussion participation, and they network with other students to compare progress and assignments. But, the dissertation requires independent activity which must meet specific guidelines, with many unique hurdles to overcome, and many decisions to make to arrive at a satisfactory study. The student must demonstrate independent action to complete the dissertation, in tandem with adhering to the advisory committee's recommendation. Many students succeed with this process but others have great difficulty managing this needed independence and responsibility.

Shaver (1985) provided the following characteristics of a working definition of responsibility.

> . . . a) some connection (usually a causal one) between an actor and an occurrence, b) a generally accepted set of moral principles by which

that occurrence is judged harmful, c) the view that the set of causes or events includes elements produced by human action, d) the assertion that the actor whose behavior is being judged voluntarily produced (or voluntarily chose not to prevent) the harmful outcome, and e) an examination of the extenuating circumstances that might release the actor from answerability for producing the outcomes. (p. 70).

Concepts from attribution theory suggest reasons for completing or not completing a dissertation. Individuals commonly search for reasons for acts that occur. Shaver (1985) stated that people understand their social environment as cause and effect. Theories of attribution may assist us to understand whether a person's disposition or their environmental circumstances suggest a causal role in dissertation completion.

In further descriptions of the dispositional properties of individuals, Shaver cited work of Heider (1958):

> . . . the ordinary perceiver's analysis of action distinguishes dispositional aspects of personal force - ability, power, intention - from dispositional aspects of environmental force - task difficulty, opportunity, or luck. To complete a task, a person's ability must exceed the task difficulty, the person must have the intention to perform the task, and there must be exertion in the direction specified by the intention. (p. 7).

Shaver commented that a balance must exist between personal force and external force with external forces perceived as potential obstacles to meeting goals. Task difficulty is a dominant external obstacle. Completion of a task is dependent on one's motivation, the intention to complete it, and one's level of exertion in working on it.

Assigning responsibility is dependent on one's view of the situation. Several models have been developed to address individuals' perspectives of the responsibility of self, environment, and others for tasks. Brickman, Rabinowitz, Karuza, Cohn, and Kidder (1982) state that:

> By drawing a distinction between attribution of responsibility for a problem (who is to blame for a past event) and attribution of responsibility for a solution (who is to control future events), we derive four general models that specify what form people's behavior will take when they try either to help others or to help themselves. (p. 368).

These models include the moral model in which individuals are responsible for both the problem and the solution, the compensatory model with persons not responsible for the problem but responsible for the solution, the medical model with persons not responsible for either the problem or the solution, and finally, the enlightenment model in which individuals are responsible for the problem but are unable or unwilling to provide solutions to it. Descriptions of the application of these models to several areas such as education, psychotherapy, law, and welfare are provided by the authors. These models can be applied to dissertation completion as in the following example. In the moral model, the student would view this problem (completing the dissertation) as their responsibility since they elected to pursue a doctorate. In the compensatory model, the student would view the dissertation as an imposed requirement that he/she is accountable for but had no voice in assigning, hence responsibility for the solution but not the problem rests with the student. In the enlightenment model the student accepts a university imposed

problem (the required dissertation tasks) but may be unable or unwilling to satisfy the requirements.

Mitchell (1988) discussed the relationship of the attribution of responsibility to self-esteem based on the work of Brickman et al. (1982). Low self-esteem was found to be related to the tendency toward internal attributions of responsibility for failure. In an earlier study of the attribution of responsibility, Mitchell (1987) found, "the correspondence was greatest between femininity and models stressing low attributions of responsibility for problem solving, i.e., the enlightenment and medical models." (p. 160).

In a discussion concerning encouragement of creative doctoral dissertations, Bargar and Duncan (1990) proposed five general principles for creative endeavors in doctoral research. One of these included "optimizing the levels of student autonomy and responsibility in all phases of the creative research endeavor." (p. 65). They stressed that serious creative thinkers take responsibility for their work.

A relationship to dissertation preparation can be drawn to the Brickman et al. (1982) concept of who is to blame for past events and who is to control future events. The student and the university (advisor and committee) represent the parties involved in the process. A consensus must be established as to who is to take major responsibility for each task involved in dissertation completion. Or, stated negatively, who is to blame (responsible) for failure to complete specified tasks. The university establishes the requirements for successful dissertation completion and the student must meet these requirements. There is a great range of intensity of student involvement in completing each task. Some students take a dominant

role in meeting these requirements and others assume that the university (advisor/committee) will provide the initiative for completing each task. And, for some students tasks are never completed and the possibility of a doctorate fades away. Often, the tasks are joint responsibilities with each party playing some part in completing defined parts of it. The proportional responsibilities for completing each task are a matter of agreement that may vary from one case to another. To be successful, it is important for students contemplating a dissertation to have a good understanding of their role and the university's role in completing each task associated with the dissertation.

The purpose of this investigation was to create and evaluate a scale to assess graduate students' concepts of responsibility associated with completion of the doctoral dissertation. Items follow Brickman et al.'s model structure. Items require appraisal of responsibility for tasks representing both problem and solution. Specifically, the items were designed to determine whether tasks associated with dissertation completion ARE student responsibilities or university responsibilities and secondly, whether these tasks SHOULD BE student responsibilities or university responsibilities.

Method

Subjects

Subjects for this study were drawn from an urban private College of Education in a western state. The College enrolls primarily doctoral students along with a smaller number of M.A. students. The scale was completed by 142 of the 154 graduates of the program (graduated within the past five years) and 97 of 111 doctoral candidates who began the program at

about the same time as the graduates and had only their dissertation to complete before graduation. Females made up 71% of the total sample and males 29%. Students were significantly older than graduates ($t=2.8$, $p<.01$). The ages of students ranged from 28 to 70 years (Mean = 44.4 yr.) and for graduates 27 to 63 years (Mean = 41.8 yr.) Males reported more full time employment than females. For graduates, 92% of males and 72% of females reported full time employment and for students, 89% of males and 72% of females indicated that they were employed full time. Females reported more part time rather than full time employment. Twenty-seven percent of graduate females indicated that they held part-time employment and 6 % of males reported that they were employed part time. For students, 23% of females and 7 % of males reported part-time employment. Very few graduates or students were unemployed. About half (47% to 66%) of the males or females in both groups reported having some experience with data analysis and the same proportion reported having experience conducting research (56% to 60%). However, only a small proportion of males or females in either group indicated that they had previously published research (10% to 23%). Among graduates, more females than males indicated that they lived in the metropolitan area while working on their dissertations (67% vs. 58%) but among students, 55% of the females and 30% of the males lived in the metropolitan area while writing the dissertation.

Instruments

The Responsibility Scale (RS) was constructed to investigate the perceptions of doctoral candidates in a College of Education concerning who (themselves or the university) is responsible for 16 different tasks associated with dissertation and degree completion. (See Appendix A.) One

end of the 7 point response continuum (point 1) indicates total student responsibility and the opposite end (point 7) indicates total university responsibility. Points 2 through 6 indicate some level of shared responsibility. An example of an item response scale is:

Locating subjects for data collection

Student Responsi-bility	1	2	3	5	5	6	7	University Responsi-bility
IS	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Should Be	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	

Subjects responded to each item of the scale twice. The first response was the student's impression of "how it IS now" and the second response was the student's notion of "how it Should Be". This represents 32 choices for the 16 items. These items originated with the authors and were used in an earlier study in which students and graduates of a doctoral program in education were compared (Kluever, 1995).

The University and College require students to prepare a dissertation proposal which must be approved by the student's advisor, the student's dissertation committee, and the College faculty. It is essentially the first three chapters of the dissertation. The student also completes an application to the Human Subjects Review Committee who must approve the research procedure. Having satisfied these requirements, the student identifies sources for data collection, collects and analyzes the data, and prepares a summary and discussion of results. The advisor and committee guide the student through the entire process, monitor preparation of the manuscript, and with their approval, the dissertation is scheduled for the final oral defense.

Although the University and College have established guidelines for

dissertation completion, the student (with faculty guidance) is responsible for implementation of all tasks necessary to complete the dissertation. The advisor and committee monitor progress of the study and quality of the manuscript. The Brickman et al. (1982) compensatory model reflects this pattern of the University establishing the requirements (the problem) but the student accepting responsibility for the solutions (dissertation completion). Students who complete their dissertation follow this pattern.

Each item of the RS represents a real requirement for completion of the dissertation according to College and University guidelines. Similar tasks were cited in the literature as common to other institutions. Also, focus groups were conducted to discuss dissertation preparation. One focus group consisted of graduates and the other group was made up of students who had not yet completed their dissertation. In order to encourage free expression, the focus groups were directed by an advanced-standing doctoral student; not by a faculty member. Items advanced in the focus groups were combined with suggestions from the literature to provide the content for the Responsibility Scale items.

Two other scales were administered to subjects along with a demographics and background information sheet. One of the scales was a 45 item Help-Hindrance scale constructed by the authors to assess students' perceptions of factors which facilitated or seemed to be barriers to dissertation completion. The reliability of the summed scores was .91.

The second scale was the 43 item Procrastination Inventory (Muszynski & Akamatsu, 1991). This inventory was originally developed to assess stresses in programs educating scientist-practitioners, with items adapted from the Procrastination Assessment Scale - Students (Soloman & Rothblum, 1984). The

items were modified to tap facets of procrastination unique to working on a dissertation. The inventory was formed from 11 subscales, some with only 2 items. Reliabilities for subscales for the present study varied from .34 to .78. (See Table 5 for subscale reliabilites.) Subscales with only two items had low reliabilites. The total scale reliability was .86.

Other items on the inventory included questions about each subject's experiences with dissertation preparation, strategies they employed in the process, and attitudes relating to events associated with working on the dissertation. Background information included items associated with employment while doing the dissertation, previous experience with research, local or distant places of residence from the campus, financial support, and ratings of perceived support systems. Responses to some items were omitted by some subjects and are reflected in the differing total sample sizes reported.

Procedure

Data were collected via a mail survey with two follow-up requests sent to non-respondents. A stamped, self addressed envelope was enclosed for the survey to be returned. The surveys for the two groups contained the same inventories and statements except for verb tense relating to dissertations completed vs. dissertations in the process of being completed. A second mailing was sent to non-respondents after 3 weeks and then a third mailing after another 3 weeks. Ninety-two percent of the graduates and 87% of the students returned the form.

Results

Data were entered as soon as received. Some inventories were returned without any marked responses and were recorded as received but with missing data. The length of the survey may have affected the decision to respond or

not respond to items or to ignore the request for information and not participate.

A principal components analysis with varimax rotation of the scale with "the way it is" and "the way it should be" analyzed separately resulted in similar factor patterns. Two factors were identified in each analysis (Table 1).

In "the way it is" scale, the factors identified were 1) organization and preparation to complete the dissertation (IS - preparation) and 2) evaluation and quality control of the process (IS - evaluation). These two factors accounted for 43.8% of the variance. In "the way it should be" scale, the same 2 factors were identified and accounted for 49.6% of the variance. Each 16 item set was then subjected to a Rasch analysis which formed the same two-dimensional structure. The Rasch analysis provided an interval rescaling of the ordinal semantic differential responses.

A Rasch analysis of each subscale was performed using BIGSTEPS (Linacre & Wright, 1994). This analysis provided information about the fit of items and persons to a unidimensional model, and provided a display of items and persons placed on a common metric. For all subscales, the 7-point scale was not well utilized. A 4-point scale would be adequate to capture responses to these items. For all measures, the sample mean fell below the item mean, indicating respondents perceived students do and should bear more responsibility for task progress than the university/committee. Distributions

Table 1

Factor loadings for "the way it is" and "the way it should be" scales

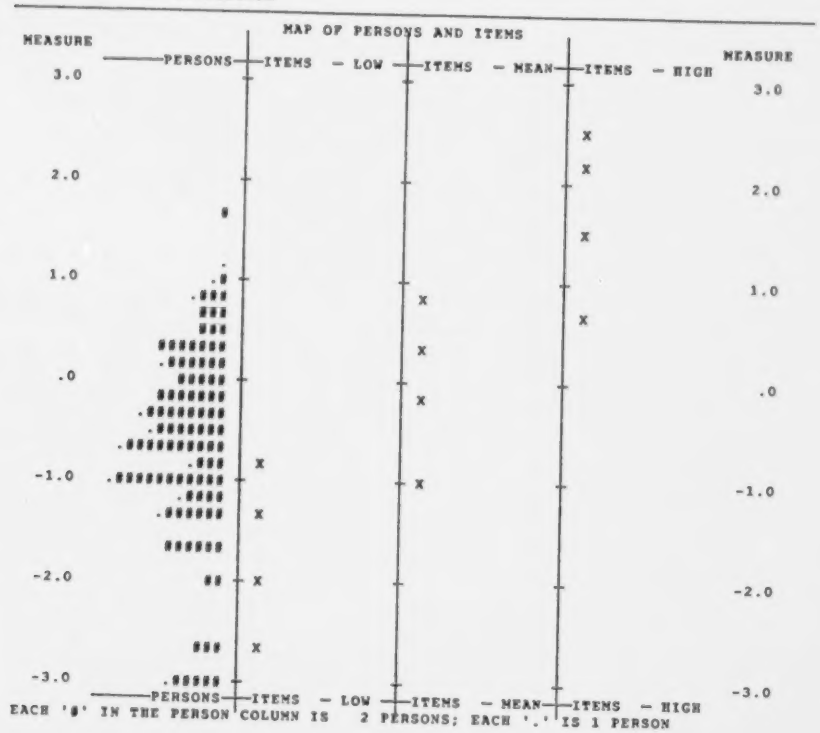
	"is"			"should be"	
Item	Factor 1 Preparation	Factor 2 Evaluation	Item	Factor 1 Preparation	Factor 2 Evaluation
1	.69		1	.66	
2	.73		2	.59	
3	.70		3	.58	
4			4	.52	
5	.50		5	.50	
6			6		
7	.77		7	.64	
8	.83		8	.70	
9	.64		9	.69	
10	.61		10	.70	
11	.66		11		
12		.83	12		.74
13	.55		13	.52	
14		.44	14	.43	
15		.82	15		.82
16		.49	16		.47
Eigenvalue:	5.77	1.66		5.00	1.57
Percent Variance:	33.30	10.50		38.50	11.10
Reliability:	.75	.69		.83	.65

for all four subscales were negatively skewed (skewness from -.790 to -.430); three were leptokurtic (Is - preparation was platykurtic).

Is - Evaluation. The reliability of this 4-item subscale was .69. All items had mean square fit values between .5 and 1.5. Five of 203 persons were identified with standardized fit values (infit or outfit) of >2.0. (Twelve persons had extremely low values and could not be calibrated.) One would expect about 10 persons by chance to display misfit. Four of the 5 were graduates. Misfit seemed due to a discrepant response to one item for 2 people and to unusual responses to 2 items for 3 people. Item 16 (developing research tool skills) had the most discrepant responses. Figure 1 displays person responses juxtaposed with items. The four items capture a wide range

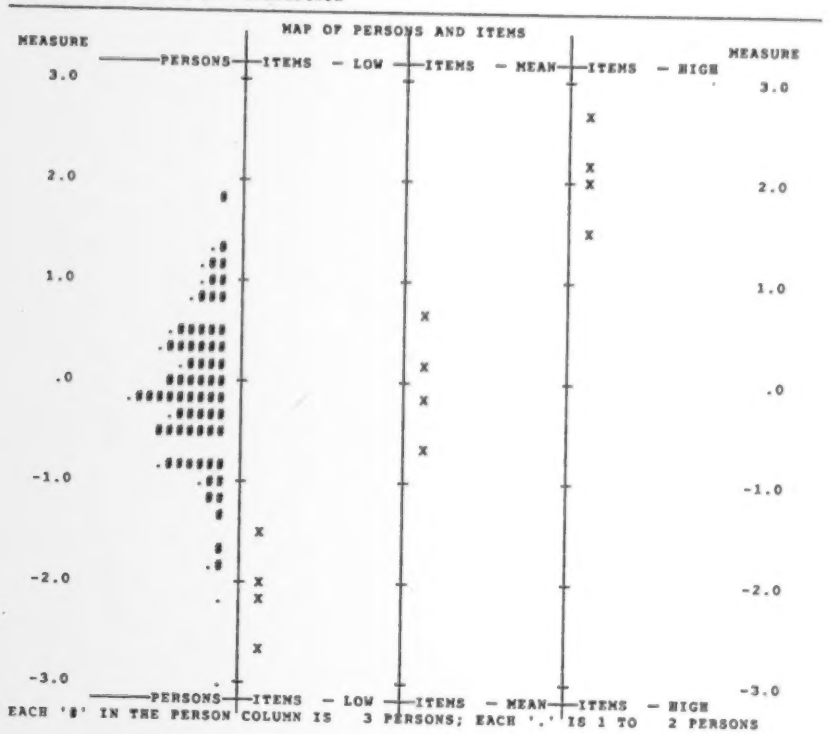
of opinion but more items clearly are needed to make this subscale useful, particularly tasks likely to be endorsed as university responsibility.

Figure 1. "Is" Evaluation



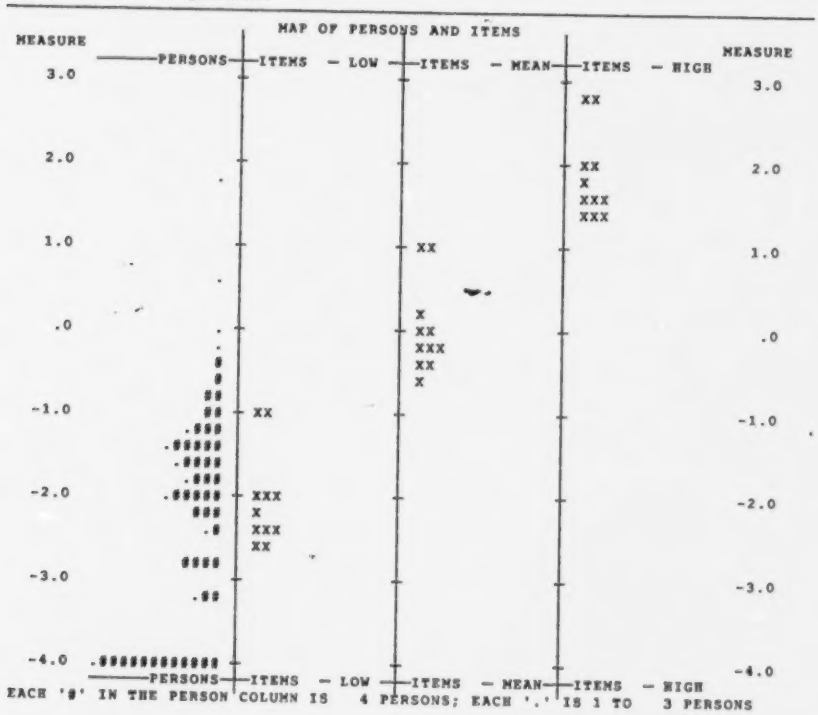
Should Be - Evaluation. The reliability of the same four items phrased as "should be" was .65. All items again showed good fit to a unidimensional model. Eleven of 212 persons had standardized fit values over +2.0, 8 of them graduates. The items with the greatest incidence of misfitting responses were items 12 (developing research tool skills) and 16 (evaluating presentation style of chapters). Figure 2 maps person and items on a common scale. Items are ordered by position in the same manner as they were for "is" responses. Items cover a narrower range. Again, more items are needed to create a viable subscale.

Figure 2. "Should Be" Evaluation



Is - Preparation. The reliability of this 11-item subscale was .75. Ten of the 174 measurable persons had fit values over 2.0, with misfit primarily due to extreme responses to a single item that may have been a sore point for the individual. Six were graduates and four were students. No single item stimulated many extreme, discrepant responses. All items had mean square fit values between .5 and 1.5. The item fitting least well was item 7 (topic selection), with a mean square infit of 1.31. Figure 3 presents the item-person map. Twenty-five people saw the student as bearing sole responsibility for all tasks. Items, while adequately targeted on the sample, did not cover the range of responses. Items likely to be perceived as university responsibility would be useful additions to the scale.

Figure 3. "Is" Preparation



Should Be - Preparation. Reliability of this 11-item subscale was .83. Fourteen of 206 measureable persons had fit values over 2.0, a number slightly higher than that expected by chance. Ten were graduates and four were students. Misfit was more scattered and less extreme than to the "is" version of this scale. No single item stimulated misfit. The item fitting least well was item 5 (preparing a human subjects application), though all item fit values were within an acceptable range. Figure 4 presents the item-person map. Respondents were likely to perceive tasks as student rather than university responsiblity, but to a lesser extent with the "should be" version than the "is" version. Again, items likely to be perceived as university responsibility would be useful.

Figure 4. "Should Be" Preparation

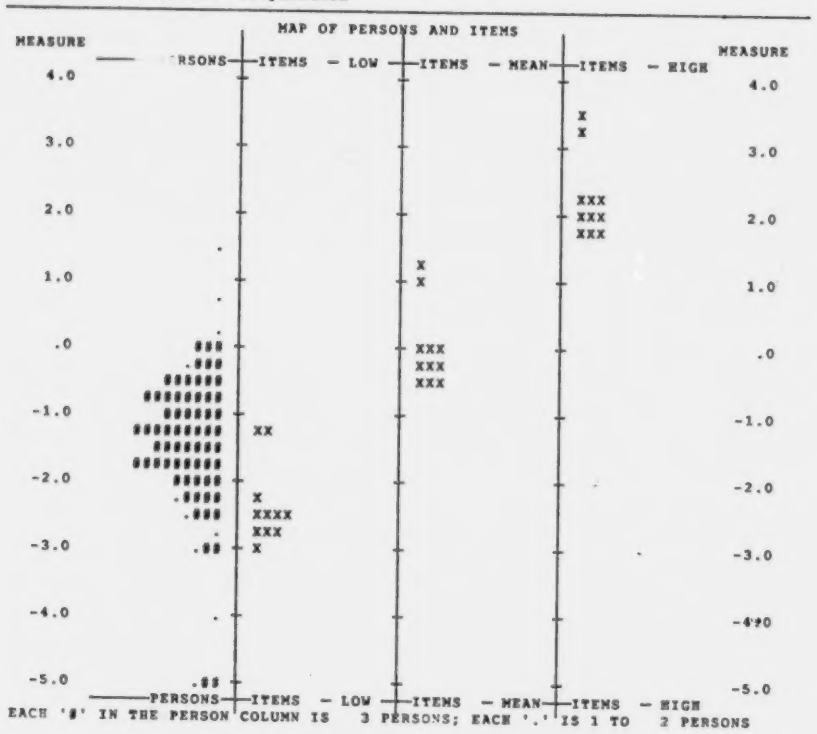


Table 2 presents the correlations among the 4 responsibility measures. All correlations were significant at $p < .01$ except the correlation between IS - evaluation and SHOULD BE - preparation.

Table 2
Measure Correlations

Variable	Is Evaluation	Preparation	Should Be Evaluation
IS Preparation	.49	.37	.24
Evaluation		.06	.58
Should Be Preparation			.43

Since the measures were conceptually related and empirically correlated, they were used as dependent variables in two MANOVAS to examine the associations of gender and program variables with perceived responsibility. First, gender and status (student vs. graduate) were used as independent

variables. A significant violation of homogeneity of variance-covariance was found (Box's M = 66.85, $p < .001$). The larger variances seemed to be paired with the larger-sized groups, thus this violation was not deemed to seriously inflate Type I error rate. There was no sigificant multivariate interaction between gender and status. There was a significant multivariate main effect of both gender and status (Wilk's lambda [gender] = .95; lambda [status] = .93). One univariate effect of gender was significant with a higher mean for women than men. Women felt that the university should be more responsible for student preparation. Univariate status effects were found for "Should Be" preparation with a higher mean for students than for graduates and for "Is" preparation with a higher mean for graduates than students. These two results suggest students to feel more strongly than graduates that they do take more responsibility for their preparation while the university should take more responsibility. Means for all variables by gender and status are found in Table 3.

Differences among students in different concentration areas (Curriculum Leadership, Higher Education, Educational Psychology, and Counseling Psychology) were then examined. No significant multivariate or univariate effects were found. Then, counseling psychology, the program area with the most stringent rules regarding proposal completion, was contrasted with the remaining three areas. Differences were found between counseling psychology and the other areas in "Is" and "Should Be" preparation. For both scales, the counseling psychology mean score was higher than the mean for the combined remaining programs, indicating that counseling psychology students and graduates perceived the university as more responsible for ensuring proper preparation for the dissertation than did students and graduates of other

Table 3

Status and gender effects on Responsibility subscales

Variable/Level		n	Mean	SD	F	p
IS Evaluation						
Gender:	Male	74	-.56	.77	-.99	.32
	Female	141	-.69	1.12		
Status:	Graduate	125	-.54	.97	1.85	.07
	Student	89	-.80	1.07		
SHOULD BE Evaluation						
Gender:	Male	73	-.23	.81	1.34	.18
	Female	140	-.07	.87		
Status:	Graduate	125	-.13	.84	-.03	.98
	Student	88	-.12	.83		
IS Preparation						
Gender:	Male	74	-2.16	1.16	-1.69	.09
	Female	141	-2.47	1.45		
Status:	Graduate	126	-2.16	1.35	2.71	.01
	Student	89	-2.66	1.33		
SHOULD BE Preparation						
Gender:	Male	74	-1.45	.94	2.20	.03
	Female	141	-1.15	.96		
Status:	Graduate	125	-1.36	1.04	-2.15	.04
	Student	87	-1.09	.83		

Note: Mean values are expressed in logits with lower means representing stronger perceptions of student responsibility and higher means reflecting stronger perceptions of university responsibility.

programs (Table 4). However, these were the only significant effects associated with concentration area.

Table 4
Concentration Effects on Responsibility Subscales

	Counseling			Remaining Programs				
Variable/Level	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	F	p
IS Preparation	32	-2.03	1.42	138	-2.58	1.31	4.34	.04
SHOULD BE Preparation	32	-.94	.92	138	-1.36	.99	4.75	.04

Note: Mean values are expressed in logits with lower means representing stronger perceptions of student responsibility and higher means reflecting stronger perceptions of university responsibility.

The four responsibility measures were then correlated with Help-Hindrance total score and Procrastination Inventory subscales. Table 5 presents these correlations. While some significant relationships were found, the values were low. Higher ratings of the difficulty of dissertation completion were associated with higher ratings of university responsibility for dissertation tasks.

The major share of responses from both groups were in the direction of tasks being student responsibility (1, 2, or 3). When the mean scores for each of the 16 items were compared for each group, it was found that students had higher ratings for 11 of the 16 "should be" items in the direction of university responsibility while graduates had higher mean scores for only 5 tasks in the direction of university responsibility. On the "is" items, the students' mean scores on all 16 items were in the direction of student responsibility for all 16 items compared to the ratings of graduates. These findings suggest that students recognize and accept the fact that dissertation tasks are their responsibility but believe that more of them should be university responsibilities (Table 6).

In a two group discriminant analysis of the scale, 78% of the subjects were correctly predicted to be members of their respective groups. A higher percentage of graduates were correctly categorized (86%) than students (65%).

Differences in ratings by persons who are in full time employment while working on the dissertation vs. part time employment vs. unemployed status were also examined. A significant difference was noted in that the unemployed preferred greater evaluation and quality control of their dissertation than was indicated by the full time employed persons. No differences in ratings

Table 5.
Correlation of Responsibility Subscales and Related Measures

Measure	Alpha	IS Prep	IS Eval	SHOULD BE Prep	SHOULD BE Eval
Help-Hindrance	.91		.20	-.23	
Procrastination:					
Low Frustration Tolerance	.34			.19	.19
Perfectionism	.52				-.14
Rebellion	.59	-.19		.25	
Difficulty Making Decisions	.41			.19	
Need for Approval	.39				
Unable to Take Help	.38		-.17		-.15
Procrastination as a Work Style	.53				
Fear of Finishing School	.60				
Self-Denigration	.68			.18	.14
Insufficient Reinforcement/ Lack of Structure	.78			.26	.24
Task Aversiveness	.75	-.15		.26	.17
Total Score	.86			.25	.18
Rated Emotional Support from:					
Advisor		.25	.20		
Committee		.23	.20		

Table 6

Graduates' and students' mean scores concerning responsibility for dissertation tasks

Group	higher "is" scores university resp.	higher "should be" scores university resp.
Graduate	16 items	5 items
Students	0 items	11 items

between any clusters of items was found for persons living in Denver while working on the dissertation vs. living there part time vs. those not living there at all while working on the dissertation.

Females indicated significantly different ratings than males on two "should be" items. Their impression is that university responsibility should be greater for assisting students in "progressing through the dissertation"

(t=.-3.30, p<.001) and for "selecting a dissertation topic" (t=.-2.15, p<.033) than males perceive it to be. Among graduates and students, significant differences were noted on 5 items. On two "should be" items, graduates rated "progressing through the dissertation" significantly lower (more of a student responsibility) than students rated it (see Table 7 below) and they believe that it "should be" a student responsibility to locate research subjects. Graduates, more so than students believed that selecting a dissertation topic, preparing the protection of human subjects application, and scheduling the pace and time line of the dissertation tends to be ("is") more of a University than a student responsibility (Table 7).

Discussion

The Responsibility Scale consists of a series of items which represent necessary activities associated with completion of the doctoral degree in education. A factor analysis of the items resulted in two factors which represent responsibility for organization and preparation of the dissertation and secondly, university quality control and evaluation of the work. The reliability of each scale separately and of the total scale was acceptable. Significant differences in perception of the graduates and students for individual scale items were identified and significant differences in subscale scores were found. The student ratings tended toward more university responsibility for events than student responsibility. The scale has value in examining the impressions of students about the dissertation process.

Some students complete a dissertation and graduate but others fail to complete it. The Brickman et al. (1982) enlightenment model relates to failure to complete the dissertation. The model suggests that students are responsible for the problem (dissertation completion) but for a variety of

Table 7
Significant differences in responsibility ratings between graduates and non-graduates

Item	Group	Mean	SD	t	p
Progressing through the dis. "should be item"	Stud.	3.29	1.13		
	Grad.	2.71	1.27	3.46	.001
Locating research subjects "should be item"	Stud.	2.86	1.40		
	Grad.	2.48	1.31	2.03	.044
Selecting the dis. topic "is item"	Stud.	1.69	1.11		
	Grad.	2.13	1.22	-2.81	.006
Preparing the protection of human subjects application "is item"	Stud.	1.40	0.74		
	Grad.	2.22	1.47	-5.26	.001
Scheduling the pace and time line for completion "is item"	Stud.	1.82	1.30		
	Grad.	2.26	1.55	-2.27	.024

reasons are unable to solve the problem by themselves. Without external intervention the dissertation will remain incomplete. A variety of internal and external environmental problems may be responsible for lack of completion such as difficulty with motivation, diminished interest, and lack of the power (ability) to do it. Advisor support, financial support, and family support are major external environmental events that influence completion or lack of completion of the dissertation. The Brickman et al. moral model would represent the graduates who show responsibility for the problem and the solution. Their own personal effort and ability is sufficient to overcome external obstacles such as lack of motivation or diminished interest and this allows for completion of the dissertation.

The work of Shaver and Heider indicate that a balance must exist between the extent of one's personal force exerted toward dissertation completion and the external forces that affect it. External support systems from the

advisor and family, financial support, and reasonable other time committments affect dissertation completion positively, and the absence of them may negatively impact it. Scale items suggesting an attitude implying more personal responsibility for the study, the power (ability) to do it, and the exertion of effort toward completing the project would form useful additions to the measure. Items that could contribute to the scale might also address advisor/ committee selection, obtaining information regarding College procedures, scheduling committee meetings, deciding when to go to defense, selecting format and style, and editing chapters.

Further investigation might probe the relationship of the areas of responsibility to measures of self-esteem as reported in Mitchell's work (1988).

An extension of this study might include investigations in other departments with varied student personal characteristics and different professional directions of graduates. Different items representing more tasks associated with graduation might also be added to the scale. A more detailed analysis of the factors associated with dissertation non-completion will be important to study as suggested by certain of the Brinkman et al. (1982) models. Further investigation might probe the relationship of the areas of responsibility to measures of self-esteem as reported in Mitchell's work (1988). The scale shows promise in exploring the attitudes toward responsibility for degree and dissertation completion of doctoral students and graduates.

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Appendix A

The Responsibility Scale

Directions: Please go through the scale twice. For each item, circle the "x" that represents your impression of the current state of where responsibilty rests (IS) for dissertation tasks and then go through the scale again and mark each item indicating your impression of where responsibility SHOULD BE.

1. Responsibility for progressing through the dissertation rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University
SHOULD BE	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

2. Responsibility for scheduling student-advisor meetings rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University
SHOULD BE	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

3. Responsibility for locating and acquiring relevant research materials relating to the dissertation topic rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University
SHOULD BE	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

4. Responsibility for selecting a dissertation topic rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University
SHOULD BE	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

5. Responsibility for submitting a protection of human subjects application rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University
SHOULD BE	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

6. Responsibility for filing documents for graduation with the University Graduate Office rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University
SHOULD BE	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

7. Responsibility for locating subjects (or sources) to provide data for the study rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University
SHOULD BE	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

Responsibility Scale (cont.)

8. Responsibility for collecting the dissertation data rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x University
SHOULD BE	Student x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

9. Responsibility for analyzing the dissertation data rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x University
SHOULD BE	Student x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

10. Responsibility for interpreting the data rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x University
SHOULD BE	Student x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

11. Responsibility for writing the chapters of the dissertation rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x University
SHOULD BE	Student x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

12. Responsibility for evaluating the presentation style of the chapters rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x University
SHOULD BE	Student x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

13. Responsibility for contacting experts whose background may contribute in some way to the dissertation problem rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x University
SHOULD BE	Student x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

14. Responsibility for scheduling the pace and time line for completion of the dissertation rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x University
SHOULD BE	Student x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

15. Responsibility for evaluating the content of the dissertation rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x University
SHOULD BE	Student x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University

16. Responsibility for developing research tools (computer, library, etc.) rests with:

IS	Student	x	x	x	x	x	x	x University
SHOULD BE	Student x	x	x	x	x	x	x	University